



# SWING DREAMS

are made of these

# A LESSON

in gypsy jazz

**D**jango Reinhardt's playing, and Gypsy guitar in general, is a mother lode of inspiration for pickers of all persuasions. When I'm stuck in a solo, I think, "What would Django do here?" Inevitably, I find something to help me along, no matter what music I'm playing. Two years ago, while at the Django Reinhardt Memorial Festival in Samois-sur-Seine, France, I met Andy Mackenzie, a great jazz guitarist from Manchester, England. He too is an aficionado of Gypsy guitar. We've written this lesson to introduce

you to Django's rich style, which, thanks to many modern players, is alive and evolving.

—JOHN JORGENSEN

**The rhythm method.** Though it's tempting to launch straight into Gypsy jazz solos, it's im-

portant to get a foundation in the unique harmony and driving four-to-the bar rhythm that's at this music's core. Because of his hand injury, Django could not play full six-string chords. Instead, he relied mainly on triads and intervals to imply a tune's har-

Ex. 1

♩ = 220

IV D7

1

7 C7

7

13 F

Gm6

Abdim

III F

Eb7

D7

13

19 G7

19

25 Dm6

A7

Dm6

A7

25

29 F

IX E

VIII Eb

VII D

VI Db

V C

F

29

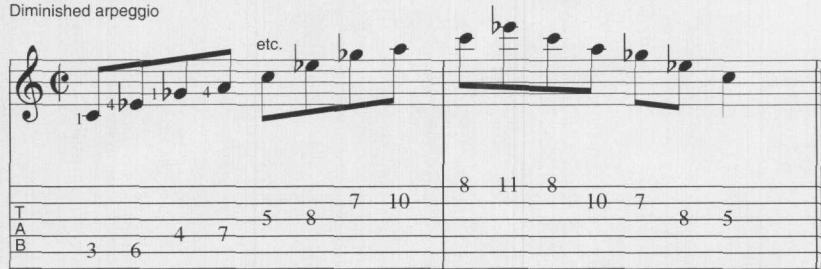
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cover a wide harmonic territory with minimal fretboard movement. For starters, it can function as a rootless dominant 7 (containing the chord tones 5, 3 and  $\flat 7$ , from low to high), as it does here. You can use this shape to imply a dominant sound, even when there's no bass playing the root.

**Scales and arpeggios.** Though Django used scale tones in his solos, he relied heavily on em-

The first voicing is a chameleon that lets you

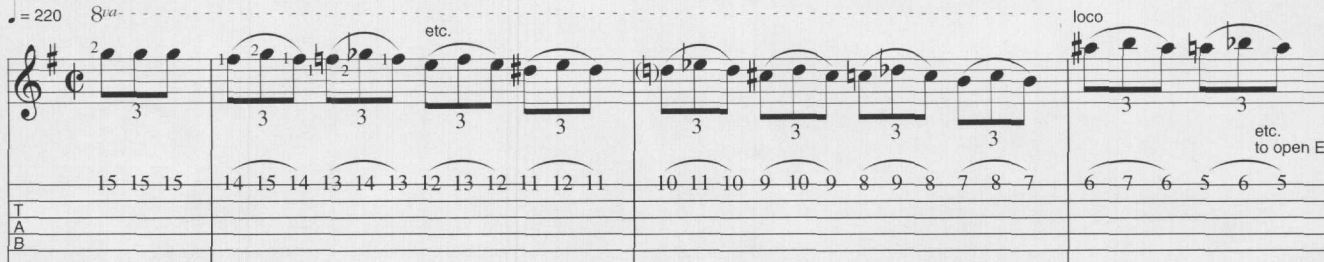
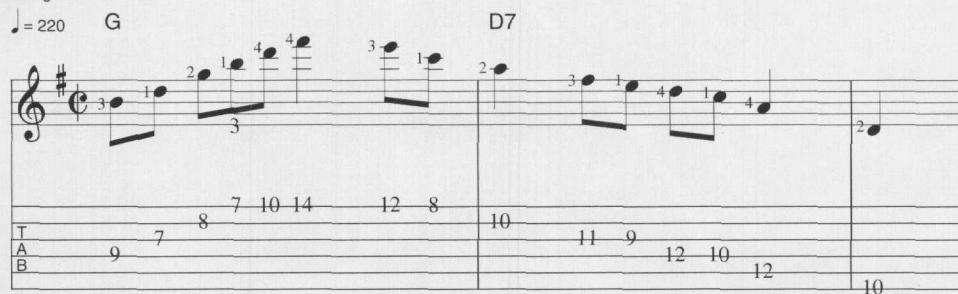
### Diminished arpeggio



## Chromatic run



Swing feel



bellished arpeggios. To get a grip on the Gypsy jazz sound, you need to thoroughly explore major, minor, dominant 7th and diminished 7th arpeggios. For instance, play Ex. 2's arpeggio over *Cdim7* or, when you want an altered bebop sound, against *C7*. For a Gypsy-flavored run, play this diminished arpeggio over *Cm6*.

In addition to major, minor (both harmonic and melodic) and pentatonic scales, Django laced his solos with more exotic chromatic and whole-tone scales. The three-octave chromatic run in **Ex. 3** puts your chops to the test. When you can flawlessly execute it at a fast swing tempo, you're on your way. Pick each note on the high-*E* string as you slide your finger along the fretboard.

**Building a solo.** To analyze Django's soloing techniques, let's explore the second improvised chorus from "Dinah," one of the tunes from the Hot Club Quintet's first recording session. In a mere 32 bars, Django lays out the techniques he and other players would develop for years to come.

We start at bar 4 of the second chorus. Django outlines the harmony with a *Gmaj7* arpeggio followed by a *D9* arpeggio (Ex. 4). Ex. 5 then descends chromatically from high



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Gusing hammers and pulls. Recorded in 1934, this lick has been used by many guitarists, in-

Ex. 6 picks up the chorus at bar 12. Here against *D7*, Django punches out the 9 with a unison *E* played on the second and first strings. He releases this tension in the next bar.

Next is the solo's bridge played in octaves (Ex. 7). This predates Wes Montgomery's lush sound by some 30 years. How Django fingered this with his deformed hand is a mystery. Note the descending glissando in bar 3—another

**Ex. 8** heralds the solo's final eight bars. Here Django repeats a flashy triplet lick using hammers, pulls and open strings. How many times have you heard this?

To dig deeper into Django's style, study his influences—including Louis Armstrong—and those who carry the flame today: Stochelo Rosenberg, Romane, Jimmy Rosenberg, Bireli Lagrene, Rafaël Faÿs and other Gypsy jazz masters. 

## ♩ = 220

D7

[illegible]

$\text{♩} = 220$

Bridge

## Bridge

## Bridge

etc.

1

4

4

1

even  
gliss

7 9 11 12 14 12 15

4 6 8 9 11 9 12

9 11

6 8

5

14 12 11 14 12 11 14 12 14 12 14 12 14

T 11 9 8 11 9 8 11 9 11 9 11 9 11

A

B

### Ex. 8

$\bullet = 220$



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